

## **Opening Statement of Chairman James Langevin**

### **Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology, Committee on Homeland Security**

#### **Markup of H.R. 1680, the “Secure Handling of Ammonium Nitrate Act”**

**March 28, 2007**

I’m pleased to chair this subcommittee markup, and I congratulate Chairman Thompson for bringing this legislation to my subcommittee.

The Chairman has been vigilant in working to get this bill to where it is today. He has been fighting for this bill for two Congresses now, and I commend him for his work and congratulate him on this legislation.

It was a year and a half ago – in December 2005 – that this Subcommittee’s predecessor – the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Nuclear and Biological Attack – held a hearing and markup on a similar provision.

That bill was marked up in full committee in June 2006, but was never brought to the floor.

To me, recognizing a threat and failing to do anything about it is unacceptable.

Each of us here today knows the devastating impact that the detonation of large quantities of ammonium nitrate can have.

It was almost twelve years ago, on April 19, 1995, that domestic terrorists murdered 168 people in Oklahoma City, including 19 children. The impact of their improvised ammonium nitrate bomb caused a blast equivalent to 4,000 pounds of TNT.

Since that time, fertilizer bombs have been used to deadly effect.

In 2002, an Islamic group linked to Al-Qaeda detonated a bomb outside a night club in Bali, Indonesia killing 202 people. In 2003, an Al Qaeda cell in Istanbul, Turkey killed 57 people in two separate explosions.

As we were considering the legislation in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, 17 Canadians were arrested and charged with plotting to attack targets with ammonium nitrate-based bombs.

Why this legislation didn’t come to the floor last year I do not know. But the risk that ammonium nitrate-based fertilizer, so critical to the agricultural operations of many of our nation’s farmers, will be used by terrorists in an improvised explosive device must be confronted and reduced.

The legislation before us today puts the Department in charge of this effort to ensure that ammonium nitrate is still available to farmers even as we try to keep it away from terrorists.

12 years after the tragedy at Oklahoma City, I am confident that we are strengthening the security of ammonium nitrate in our country. I thank Chairman Thompson for his leadership on this critical issue, and I am proud to co-sponsor this important piece of legislation.